

Portrait Unveiling & Courtroom  
Naming Ceremony of

THE HONORABLE HAILE L. ALFORD

PRESENT: THE HONORABLE JAMES T. VAUGHN JR.,  
President Judge, Superior Court of the  
State of Delaware

THE HONORABLE RICHARD R. COOCH,  
Resident Judge, Superior Court of the State  
of Delaware

- - - - -  
Friday, September 16, 2005  
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New Castle County Courthouse  
Courtroom 8A  
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

1 THE HONORABLE JAMES T. VAUGHN JR: Good  
2 afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to welcome  
3 everyone to a very special sessions of the Superior  
4 Court of Delaware. The Honorable Haile L. Alford

5 died suddenly on August 11th, 2003. On April 30,  
6 2004, the Court held a special session to honor and  
7 commemorate her memory. Today we meet for the  
8 unveiling of a portrait of Judge Alford and naming  
9 this courtroom in her honor.

10 I would like to begin by welcoming the  
11 members of Judge Alford's family who are with us  
12 today. We have her daughter, Kaami, who will be  
13 speaking in a few minutes. Also present are Haile's  
14 brother, Harry, and his wife, Esther; Haile's  
15 brother, Douglas Alford; her niece, Kia Alford.  
16 Also, her secretary, Benita Smith. Of course, Kaami  
17 who I just mentioned.

18 Also present are Bill Ewing and Mrs. Ewing  
19 who -- Bill Ewing was the artist for the portrait  
20 that we will be seeing in a moment.

21 Also present is Arnetta McRae, a good  
22 long-time friend of Haile's. Also present is  
23 Jeanette Arrington, a criminal case manager and a

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1 good friend of Haile's. And also present, Novene  
2 Reed, a former civil case manager for Haile.

3 Now, Haile's son Julian is not able to be  
4 present with us today, but I know that he is with us  
5 here in spirit.

6 I would also like to welcome the members of  
7 the Bench and Bar who are here, distinguished guests,  
8 members of the Court staff who are present and all of  
9 Judge Alford's friends.

10                   Now, we're going to begin the ceremony,  
11                   ladies and gentlemen, by unveiling the portrait. I  
12                   will then be recognizing Resident Judge Cooch, but we  
13                   will proceed now to unveil the portrait.

14                   So, Kaami, would you join me by the portrait?  
15                   (Portrait unveiled.)

16                   THE HONORABLE JAMES T. VAUGHN, JR: I now  
17                   recognize the Honorable Richard R. Cooch, Resident  
18                   Judge of the Superior Court in and for New Castle  
19                   County.

20                   THE HONORABLE RICHARD R. COOCH: Thank you,  
21                   President Judge Vaughn. The President Judge will be  
22                   speaking shortly in a little greater length on behalf  
23                   of the Superior Court, but it's my privilege as

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1                   Resident Judge to welcome everybody, including  
2                   particularly Judge Alford's family and her many  
3                   friends.

4                   Today, it's a somber occasion in one sense,  
5                   because we're all reminded of Judge Alford's untimely  
6                   death. But it's also an uplifting occasion because  
7                   this, to my mind, absolutely superb portrait that's  
8                   just been unveiled wonderfully captures Judge  
9                   Alford's enthusiasm for life, her enthusiasm for her  
10                  family, for this Court and for the administration of  
11                  justice. And I do want to extend my appreciation to  
12                  all who have in various ways made this portrait  
13                  unveiling ceremony a reality.

14                  A new generation of lawyers is coming along  
15                  who will never have known Judge Alford, however, this

16 portrait, which will be hung right about where the  
17 Seal is behind the portrait, will be a continuing  
18 reminder to everyone of Judge Alford's life and her  
19 work and of her legacy. Thank you.

20 THE HONORABLE JAMES T. VAUGHN, JR: Thank  
21 you, Resident Judge Cooch.

22 The Court now recognizes Chipman L. Flowers,  
23 Jr, Esquire, Chair Emeritus of the Multicultural

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1 Judges & Lawyers Section of the Delaware State Bar  
2 Association.

3 MR. FLOWERS: President Judge Vaughn,  
4 Resident Judge Cooch, Members of the Superior Court,  
5 other members of our State and Federal Judiciary, of  
6 course the Alford family, distinguished guests, their  
7 representatives and the people of the State of  
8 Delaware, we come together to honor a special life in  
9 an unparalleled time in our brief history, when the  
10 identity of our nation and the very laws upon which  
11 it was founded are being tested, a time when  
12 compassion for mankind and the very proposition that  
13 all men are created equal are no longer assumed as  
14 fundamental and inherent, but has emerged as part of  
15 a larger debate of whether this nation and our great  
16 State will endure the ages.

17 It is in the midst of this defining moment in  
18 our history that we are here to honor the  
19 contributions of a wonderful life, spirit and soul, a  
20 life that was dedicated to the compassion of mankind

21 and that embodied the very principles that we seek to  
22 protect and preserve for eternity.

23 The Honorable Haile L. Alford, the first  
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1 African American female appointed to a Delaware  
2 Constitutional Court, and our friend, served as a  
3 beacon of light who dispensed decisions grounded in  
4 the law and guided by compassion and the realities of  
5 life, a legal framework that is so relevant in these  
6 unsettling times. Miss her, we truly do.

7 Borrowing an expression from Lincoln, the  
8 world will little remember what we say here, but it  
9 can never forget the contributions of Judge Alford  
10 and others like her, who dedicated their lives to  
11 advancing the principles that we hold so dearly.

12 Many of us will not be able to view this  
13 magnificent portrait on a continual basis.  
14 Nevertheless, we find comfort knowing that Judge  
15 Alford, our beacon of light, is now prominently  
16 displayed in this hall of justice.

17 There will most certainly come a day when the  
18 life of an innocent man or woman will hang in the  
19 balance in this very courtroom. During the course of  
20 those proceedings, it is our hope that such a person  
21 will cast his eyes upon this portrait and be reminded  
22 of our beacon of light, with her signature smile, and  
23 think everything's going to be all right. The spirit

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1 of this great soul lives on. Miss her, we truly do.

To the artist, Bill Ewing, and his lovely wife, Mary, who are here today, you have brilliantly captured the essence and soul of this beautiful woman. Unquestionably, your work has struck a chord with all a piece of us today and we thank you.

To Judge Ridgely, Judge Cooch, both of whom represented the Court in this worthy initiative of the Multicultural Judges and Lawyers Section of the Delaware State Bar Association and assured it became a reality, we thank you.

To Detanya Mack, the former Chair of the Multicultural Judges and Lawyers Section who worked tirelessly for this cause and is a constant reminder that good shall prevail over evil and the other fine members of the Multicultural Judges and Lawyers Section whose selfless actions and committment to this effort have been admirable, we thank you.

To the Delaware law firms and other individuals who contributed to this cause, all those who knew this great woman, we are truly indebted to your generosity, we thank you.

And to those fine Jurists seated in that jury

box today, the accomplishments that we are here to celebrate could not have been done without your support and contributions. Not only are you among the finest jurists of this great nation but, more importantly, you are fine human beings, we thank you.

And to the Alford family, it has been the highest honor to have known this great woman. It is

8 without question that no words, no fine brush strokes  
9 of paint, no courtroom can express our sincere  
10 gratitude and appreciation of this wonderful life,  
11 this beacon of light, we thank you.

12 And to the people of the State of Delaware,  
13 through this courtroom portrait and collective  
14 spirit, Judge Alford is now preserved for the ages.  
15 She is the newest member of that great pantheon of  
16 Delaware Jurists.

17 Let us go forth from this place knowing that  
18 our beacon of light shall now and henceforth shine  
19 upon us. May God bless you, the State of Delaware,  
20 and those vested to protect and uphold Her laws in  
21 The Honorable Haile L. Alford Courtroom. Thank you.

22 THE HONORABLE JAMES T. VAUGHN, JR: Thank  
23 you, Mr. Flowers.

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1 The Court now recognizes, Ellen L. Winslow,  
2 President of the Delaware State Bar Association.

3 MS. WINSLOW: President Judge Vaughn,  
4 Resident Judge Cooch, members of the Delaware Bench  
5 and Bar and family, friends and colleagues of Judge  
6 Alford, it is a privilege for me to have the  
7 opportunity to speak briefly on this lovely occasion  
8 on behalf of the Delaware State Bar Association of  
9 which Judge Alford was a member.

10 I did not have the opportunity to know Judge  
11 Alford personally until April 30th, 2004, the date of  
12 her memorial ceremony right in the courtroom next

13 door. She was very much alive on that day.

14 I was already familiar with her public  
15 service, but what came through loud and clear that  
16 day were her ability to relish life, her very obvious  
17 devotion to family and friends, including her  
18 colleagues on the bench, and her delight in travel.

19 Those such as I who had missed the  
20 opportunity to know Judge Alford personally received  
21 from her colleagues and friends the lessons she so  
22 effectively taught them: Love life, love people and  
23 serve. What a wonderful way to live.

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1 And now, these and other traits of Judge  
2 Alford's that we fondly remember are memorialized in  
3 the portrait that has been unveiled, thanks to the  
4 leadership of the Multicultural Judges and Lawyers  
5 Section who set the goal for this portrait and then  
6 raised the money to make it happen.

7 Many law firms and corporations contributed  
8 generously to the portrait. Likewise, a large number  
9 of individual members of the Bar Association,  
10 including many outside the two sections in which  
11 Judge Alford was most active, namely the  
12 Multicultural Judges and Lawyers Section and The  
13 Women in Law section, and especially including her  
14 colleagues on the bench generously contributed to  
15 make this portrait a reality.

16 Those contributions are just one indication  
17 of the huge fondness for Judge Alford that continues  
18 in the Delaware Bar. Today and every day that we see



19 her portrait, we get to be reminded to love life and  
20 to serve, two things that Judge Alford did very well.  
21 Thank you.

22 THE HONORABLE JAMES T. VAUGHN, JR: Thank  
23 you, Ms. Winslow.

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1 I would now like to recognize Judge Alford's  
2 daughter, Kaami.

3 MS. MOORE: First, on behalf of my family, I  
4 would like to thank everyone and anyone who had  
5 anything to do with making this a reality. I believe  
6 that it is a testament to your relationship with my  
7 mother and her relationship to you all that two years  
8 after her passing, the Court was dedicated enough to  
9 honor my mother in such a wonderful way and I know my  
10 family is quite proud at this moment.

11 And, quite honestly, I think it was something  
12 that needed to be done. Not for those of us here,  
13 who knew my mother personally in this courtroom, and  
14 certainly not for my family members, because we all  
15 remember her dearly every day. We have pictures all  
16 over our house and have her in our heart and our  
17 memories.

18 So not for us, but for those who cannot  
19 envision their fate being so great. You'd be  
20 surprised what people don't believe they can possibly  
21 achieve until they see it has already been  
22 accomplished.

23 I was, in fact, amazed at people's reaction

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1 to my mom and her accomplishments. Maybe because  
2 it's because I always believed that she could do  
3 anything. I always thought she was so strong, so  
4 beautiful, so independent. There was nothing in my  
5 eyes that my mother couldn't do.

6 I remember some of my friends would always  
7 want to be around my mom. She would -- they would  
8 always, whenever talking to me say, Tell your mom I  
9 said hi, or they would also want to refer to my mom  
10 as their mom. And, quite frankly, I would get  
11 jealous. I would say, No, that's my mom, you know,  
12 you have your own mom.

13 And they would always be quick to point out  
14 when they saw my mom in the newspaper or different  
15 things that they saw her name attached to. And deep  
16 down I knew that it was because they were proud of my  
17 mom and that they were proud that they knew her and  
18 that they were inspired by her.

19 And I remember on another occasion when I was  
20 in college and speaking with -- with a friend of mine  
21 in school about the Cosby show and how he thought  
22 that it was completely unrealistic the things that  
23 happened in the Cosby show. And me, given my

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1 background, I said, Why, because they're still  
2 married? My parents are divorced. And he said, No,  
3 because it's completely unrealistic for a black man  
4 to be a doctor and for his wife to be a lawyer. And

5 I said, well my dad's not a doctor but both of my --  
6 both of my parents are in law and they both  
7 eventually became judges. And he absolutely did not  
8 believe me. And I said, you know, I'm grown, I don't  
9 need to make up stories about what my parents do, I'm  
10 telling you, they're judges.

11 And so later -- later on during my college  
12 years, he had the privilege of meeting my mom when  
13 she came down. And I remember being -- I thought it  
14 was so funny because he was so scared in meeting her  
15 and nervous. And if you saw this -- this guy, he's a  
16 big football player from Miami, huge as a matter of  
17 fact, and he was just so nervous to meet her. He did  
18 not know how to respond to her, how to react to her,  
19 how to introduce himself to her and he was just so  
20 nervous. But then when he finally met her, he was  
21 just so amazed at her humility and how she was a  
22 normal person. And, in fact, you know, after dinner  
23 we played Taboo and he just thought she was the best

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1 thing.

2 So for all the people who had a part in this,  
3 I thank you for keeping her memory alive here. I  
4 know that it's a wonderful thing that you're doing  
5 and I know that her -- her picture will remind those  
6 of things that can be achieved if they can believe.

7 The other thing I wanted to say, I wasn't  
8 sure if I should, because I thought it might be too  
9 real for this ceremony, but if you give me the  
10 opportunity, hopefully, it will be a blessing to

11           someone who's going through a similar situation.  
12           Because for the past two years, my life has been  
13           paralyzed by my grief, but a couple of months ago, I  
14           had a breakthrough. The person who was so nervous  
15           for seeing -- for meeting my mom, we had a  
16           conversation and it just so happened that he had  
17           recently lost his mother to cancer. And so we were  
18           speaking on the phone about the circumstances in  
19           which our -- our mothers passed away and he was  
20           talking about how he was just paralyzed by watching  
21           her kind of weaken and -- and, you know, going  
22           through the things that she was going through with  
23           her treatment.

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1                       And then when I explained the situation  
2           surrounding my mother's passing, all he could say  
3           was, Man, your mother is amazing. I know I only met  
4           her once, but what really struck me about her is her  
5           strength, her presence and her courage. And she was  
6           even that in her death. He said in a way she seemed  
7           to defy death by saying if you want me, you must take  
8           me as I am. You must -- I will keep my strength, I  
9           will keep my independence. If I am going to walk  
10          over to the other side, I will walk over as I am.

11                      And that struck me, because that's exactly  
12          how I always remembered my mother. I remembered her  
13          strength and her independence and her perseverance  
14          and that's what gave me peace and that's what allowed  
15          me to do what I know she was so desperately wishing

16 for me to do, and that was to keep living.

17 And so I understand that that might not make  
18 sense to some of the people in this audience, but  
19 it's what made sense to me. So everyone needs to  
20 find their own peace in getting through these  
21 difficult times and I hope that this has helped.  
22 Thank you so much.

23 THE HONORABLE JAMES T. VAUGHN, JR: Thank you  
16

1 very much, Kaami, for your wonderful remarks.

2 The special session of the Court held last  
3 year to honor and commemorate Judge Alford's memory,  
4 her friends, family and fellow judges eloquently  
5 described Haile's many outstanding qualities,  
6 including her compassion, her faith, her fairness,  
7 her gracious personality and her devotion to equal  
8 justice under the law. There was a special quality  
9 to the warmth of her personality and her humor and  
10 her kindness.

11 On behalf of the Court, I thank each of our  
12 speakers today for helping us in again remembering  
13 Judge Alford. I also thank the Bar Association and  
14 all of the people, law firms and organizations who  
15 participated for making it possible to have this  
16 magnificent portrait commissioned and presented here  
17 today.

18 I especially thank the Multicultural Judges  
19 and Lawyers Section of the Delaware Bar Association  
20 for its role in initiating and leading this effort.

21 Judge Alford was keenly aware that she served

22 as a role model. At her Vestiture to this Court, she  
23 recognized this. Here is a small part of what she

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1 said that day:

2 "It gives me great pleasure to know that I am  
3 contributing to a greater perception of inclusion,  
4 the American dream of liberty and justice for all. I  
5 am proud to serve as a role model for young people  
6 who may look at me and say yes to their dreams rather  
7 than doubt and despair."

8 Judge Alford carried out her responsibility  
9 as a role model and discharged the duties of her  
10 office with grace, dignity, humility and compassion.  
11 This superb portrait will be prominently displayed in  
12 this courtroom and, henceforth, this courtroom, 8A,  
13 shall be named as the Judge Haile L. Alford  
14 Courtroom.

15 This is a fitting tribute to her memory. She  
16 was an inspiration to all who knew her. By her  
17 presence in this courtroom, she will continue to  
18 serve as an inspiration to young people who may look  
19 at her and say yes to their dreams and to all others  
20 who seek justice and equity under the law.

21 I thank everyone for attending this ceremony  
22 today. Everyone is invited to a reception which will  
23 be held in the lobby outside the courtroom.

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1 This special session of the Court is now  
2 adjourned.

3 (Court adjourned.)

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